

REPORT on the political feeling in the
district of the Consulate-General at Zurich.

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When the war broke out in August 1914 no person knowing how Germany had gradually arrived at a peaceful penetration of the German speaking parts of Switzerland was in the least surprised at the determined Pro-German attitude of the Press in these parts. By fair means and foul German interests had, since 1870, taken such a firm hold in northern and eastern Switzerland, that nothing else could be expected. Scarcely one of the more important newspapers was then entirely free from Germans on the editorial staff, several ones like the notorious "St. Galler Tagblatt" are owned to this day by Germans. The leading commercial journal of the whole of Switzerland, the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" was so pronounced *pro-* German for many years passed, that a stranger taking up the paper would have fancied to have a German publication before him. The "Zürcher Post", the democratic rival of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", which at the time of the Boer war was absolutely the only daily paper in Switzerland siding with England, became so pro-German since the beginning of the war, that I was obliged to resign as a member of the Board of the paper after having belonged to it and financially ^{supported} the journal ever since. The "Zürcher Post" now virtually belongs to the well-known and powerful advertising firm of Rudolf Mosse in Berlin. The "Landbote" of Winterthur, the third important political Zurich paper, was violently Pro-German, the foreign editor being a former schoolmaster from Württemberg (he is now ~~gone~~ back there after twenty years' stay in Winterthur). The non-political "Zürcher Tages-Anzeiger

which has by far the largest circulation of any newspaper with a daily issue of 75000 copies, was founded by Germans and actually is owned by one now. Of the socialistic papers the "Volksrecht" was partly edited by a very aggressive German, who lately was compelled by the radical section of the party to quit. The other socialistic paper published at Zürich, the old-established and influential "Grütliener" was from the beginning on the side of the Allies.

Of the Bâle papers everyone is more or less Pro-German with the sole exception of the socialistic journal. The "Thurgauer Zeitung" much read in the eastern ^{Cantons} ~~Switzerland~~, is quite Pro-German, and the Grisons papers were most offensive until they were warned indirectly by me that a boycott on the part of the English and their Allies might possibly come if they continued to be so abusive. The "Vaterland" of Lucerne, the most read roman-catholic paper in Switzerland, is hopelessly Pro-German, taking its cue from the German ultramontane journal "Germania", and the roman-catholic Daily published at Zurich, the "Neue Zürcher Nachrichten" is the most violent of all and had to be cautioned lately by the Federal Council.

Thus the Press of my district, with the exception of the Italian speaking Canton of Tessin, which is evenly for the Allies, presents a sorry spectacle of prejudice and partiality to this very day: the form of Anglophobia has become less offensive, the substance remains the same. Whilst strongly worded attacks on the Allies have become scarcer, there is never a word of sympathy or friendly feeling for England in any of these ~~foreign~~ letters of Anglophile swiss now returned and there

from Germans and their Swiss sympathizers printed freely, even as leading articles. There is no doubt whatever in the minds of well-informed people, that good many of these Pro-German papers receive secret subsidies out of the famous Reptile fund of Prince Bismarck: with the exception of half-a-dozen big journals all the Swiss papers are non-paying concerns and the social and moral standing of the editors is a low one: they are mostly broken-down lawyers, schoolmasters, parsons, etc. without means or position and badly paid. The competition is an excessive one, Switzerland with a population of $3\frac{3}{4}$ million souls possessing over a thousand newspapers and periodicals, thus marching at the head of all other countries in this respect.

Whilst the attitude of the Press is clear to every observer of Swiss things, the real feeling of the People is more difficult to gauge. A variety of causes have worked together to produce the Pro-German feeling which really existed since the outbreak of the war and still prevails. First the affinity of blood and language. When the Germans seemed to beat down everything in Belgium and France, the average Swiss felt a kind of pride as belonging to the conquering race possessing the furor teutonius: this same feeling was very strong during the first part of the Boer War when the Swiss peasants compared themselves to the victorious Boers. From the beginning the opinion of the man in the street was of course made by the Press which quasi unisono exaggerated every German success and minimised every advantage gained by the Allies. The middle and higher classes were equally influenced by the Press and besides are tied to Germany by thousands of material and spiritual ties. Our biggest banks, our greatest factories and industrial concerns, our higher schools and
Universities

Universities are all more or less in German hands, whilst French and English local interests are few and far between. The Swiss military class, which has grown much more powerful since the new army-organization was accepted by the Swiss people a few years ago, look upon the Prussian militarism as an ideal to be introduced and imitated in Switzerland. The Swiss General Wille is the son of German parents and married to a Countess Bismarck and all his sympathies and those of his numerous followers are German. These people are convinced of the final victory of the Central Powers and they speak and act accordingly. The Bourgeois class are afraid of Germany's mighty power and therefore approve of the pro-German attitude of the Press, however they may dislike and abuse amongst themselves the arrogant ways of Germans in this country. In Zürich the proportion of Germans to Swiss is extraordinary, nearly one third of the entire population being of the former nationality. One meets Germans at every dinner-table in the higher classes, in every club or circle, on every board of directors, in fact where-ever one goes they are in evidence and their descendants fill many places of trust and power (Herr Hoffmann, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs and late President of the Swiss Confederation is also the son of a German).

The Swiss point of gravity, financially and politically, lies in Zurich as the centre of commercial and industrial Switzerland and not at Berne, the seat of the Government. The Bernese papers are not much read and have no influence whatever in these parts. Now the inhabitants of the eastern Cantons are keen workers with an unusually developed "Erwerbsinn" (sense of gain). Only money counts amongst them and nothing else: in fact they are

material and grasping to a degree. It is easy to understand that under these circumstances the question of pounds, shillings and pence is uppermost in their minds, abstract ideas of liberty, justice and international obligations not entering their heads at all. The old French saying "Point d'argent, point de Suisses" still holds good. The French, who constantly had between 20 and 30,000 Swiss mercenaries in their service knew their people. Enormous amounts of Swiss capital, all savings by the inhabitants of eastern Switzerland, are invested in Germany or by German Banks acting with such Swiss Banks as the Kreditanstalt and Leu & Co. in Zurich, Handelsbank and Bankverein in Bâle and Zurich and minor Banks. If Germany is defeated all these investments are endangered, hence the wish that she may be victorious. There is another consideration moving the moneyed classes, which in this Republic take the place of aristocracies and military castes in Monarchies and are really ruling the country (Switzerland is nominally a Democracy but de facto a Plutocracy). They look upon Germany with Prussia at her head as the safest barrier against Socialism, of which they are much afraid. When amongst themselves, many of these prominent bankers, manufacturers, exporters and merchants make no secret of their open sympathies with Germany which would not stop short at the annexation of Switzerland. I could lay my hands on dozens of such people in high positions who would willingly become German to-day rather than to-morrow on account of the great economical advantages accruing to them as citizens of a big country. And it is exactly these people that control the commercial Press in Zurich, St. Gall, Bâle and everywhere. So it is unreasonable to expect much change in attitude until the Allies gain

decidedly

decidedly the upperhand. Then a change would come over the scene. The sympathies with and admiration of Germany would give way to fear of the Allies, and the same money-grubbing classes would sponge up to the winning side. Before that takes place no real improvement in the feelings of the bulk of the German-Swiss people can be expected: it is of no use making oneself illusions on this point.

(sd) H. Angst.

Regensberg

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